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THE BULLETIN OF THE
INSTITUTE OF CHILD STUDY

Parental Dilemmas, Choices, and Values

KARL S. BERNHARDT*

IT HAS BEEN SAID that living is a continuous series of choices. It is certainly true that being a parent necessitates making many choices. However, in learning and practising parenthood, we need to distinguish between genuine choices and dilemmas or false choices. A genuine choice is presented when the issue is clear-cut and definite, when the selection of one alternative automatically excludes the other and confusion results if one tries to retain both alternatives. Such genuine choices concern, in the main, attitudes or approaches. Whether we choose deliberately and intelligently, after thought and evaluation, or merely drift into one way or the other, we have done the same thing in the end—made a genuine choice.

A dilemma, however, consists of a pair of alternatives, *both* of which are undesirable. Child-study literature sometimes presents extremes of parental guidance, each seeming undesirable, but of which parents feel they must choose one. Here the choice is an apparent or false one, and the only way to deal with such "dilemmas" is to refuse to be "caught."

A third kind of problem demands a decision as to relative importance or priority rather than a choice between clear-cut alternatives. Here, rather than accepting one alternative and discarding the other, it may be possible and even desirable to retain *both*, perhaps giving one rather more emphasis than the other.

SOME PARENTAL DILEMMAS

Areas of human thought which are deficient in factual information are often characterized by pendulum-like swings from one extreme to the other. In such circumstances we are presented with false choices or dilemmas—alternatives which are equally undesirable and unacceptable. This is very true in the field of child training where some of the swings have been rather extreme, posing unnecessary dilemmas, on the horns of which many parents are caught.

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We parents also become faced with dilemmas because we seek to be provided with simple rules. We keep asking, "What is the right thing to do?" or "What formula applies here?" When we try to reduce the complex business of bringing up children to a few simple rules, we are *inviting* dilemmas. To try to apply a rule of thumb to varying situations and different individuals is to ask for trouble.

There is one old dilemma that keeps recurring in each generation. This is expressed in the two words *freedom* and *discipline*. When the words are put in opposition—*freedom or discipline*—there only *appears* to be a choice. What we have in reality is a dilemma. This same dilemma is expressed in a number of ways, for example "*free expression vs. control*," "*self-demand vs. a regular routine*." *But there is no real choice here.* Both freedom and discipline are necessary. Rather than being opposed, they complement one another. Discipline implies responsibility, order, and regulation, and it is only when these qualities are present that freedom is possible. We make freedom possible for the child by helping him to learn to be responsible and self-disciplined.

Another false choice is well illustrated by the remarks of a mother who had listened to a talk about "Discipline." After hearing the reasons given for discarding corporal punishment, that long-used method of keeping children in order, she finally burst out with, "But you can't reason with them all the time!" She was caught in the dilemma of "*punishment vs. reason*." Evidently she saw only these two possibilities. Now this mother was right; one cannot reason with children all the time. Reasoning too often deteriorates into arguments or a battle of words. But this is a dilemma we should never accept; punishing and reasoning are not true alternatives. Narrowing down the possibilities to spanking children or talking them into doing something shows a rather serious lack of thought and imagination.

Another old dilemma, which used to cause some soul-searching and is still fairly common, was expressed as a choice between a home (or school) that is child-centred and one that is adult-centred. This dilemma was posed at the time when people were beginning to doubt the wisdom of the old idea that "the child should be seen and not heard." Previously the home had been "mother's," the furniture "father's" and "children must not be allowed to be a nuisance." The convenience, comfort, and whims of adults determined what was done and not done. *Life with Father* marked the transition. Then, still later, came the so-called child-centred home (often a child dominated home) in which everything revolved around the children. Children were not to be "frustrated," and in many cases were allowed to run wild so that their budding personalities might not be stifled. We have learned that here was another of these false

choices; the home did not have to be adult- *or* child-centred, but could be run for the benefit of all. Today we are trying to build homes in which *all* members are considered important: democratic homes which are neither adult dictatorships nor child anarchies.

Not long ago a newspaper article claimed that parents are faced with the choice of returning to the "tried and true" method of spanking, or seeing continued increase in delinquency. Present-day advocates of corporal punishment (and they seem to be increasing in number) pose this apparent choice: spank the child or watch him become a delinquent. But this choice is obviously a dilemma and we do not have to accept either "alternative." Neither spanking children nor letting them run wild is sensible; *and there are other possibilities*. In order to be effective, discipline does not have to involve pain, fear, and torture. In fact we are finding that, to be effective in the long run, discipline must be based on methods which help the child to understand and accept the necessary controls of civilized living rather than merely to learn to do what he is told through fear of punishment by adults.

The most recent dilemma presented to parents is in some ways the most puzzling. Perhaps it is so new that we have not yet gained sufficient perspective to see what it means. It can be stated thus: "Are you an authoritarian or a permissive parent?" When we first look at this question, it seems to present a genuine choice: one must be *either* authoritarian *or* permissive. But this is because we have been forced by the question to think in terms of extremes—and these extremes are clear enough. The authoritarian parent is in effect saying to the child, "You do what I say, and don't ask why; I'm the boss; I know best." At the other extreme, the permissive parent seems to be saying to the child, "You do as you like." We pose this dilemma when we think in extremes, and perhaps all extremes produce false choices.

No parent has to accept such a dilemma or make such a choice. There is a place for authority and a place for permissiveness, as we saw when we considered discipline and freedom. A good parent is neither a dictator nor a wishy-washy adult who can never say, "You must" or "You must not." A child feels more secure in a home where there is a measure of decision and a clear statement of boundaries. Parents should be able to make rules that are necessary, reasonable, and understandable, and to enforce them consistently and impersonally. At the same time, there can be freedom of choice when it is within the child's ability to choose.

The twentieth century has been called the century of the child. During its first half, the old authoritarian approach was fast going out of fashion and the "love them and let them learn" method was being given a trial; today a return to authoritarian ways is being advocated. There is no real

need, however, for *either* extreme. The way out is to deny the soundness of the apparent choice and to find another method, one that is better than either the "command-obey" or the "let them do as they like" method. This way is to guide the behaviour and learning of children by the use of logical, impersonal, relevant, and consistent consequences. For about three decades now we have been suggesting to parents that they need not choose between the "Do as I say" and the "Do as you like" approaches. We have said that it is possible instead slowly to build up a child's understanding of what is involved in happy, effective living. The keynote of such an approach is in making sure that a child experiences the kinds of result of his own behaviour which help him learn to choose for himself. While the child is learning, parents win his trust by being, not stern but *consistent*, not permissive but *just*, and by unhesitatingly making decisions for the child until he is able to make them for himself.

There are many more dilemmas in the field of child training. There is only one solution to them: refuse to be caught on their horns. "Do you beat your wife or send her to bed without her dinner?" This is a silly question; dilemmas are always silly.

APPARENT CHOICES WHICH ARE REALLY MATTERS OF RELATIVE EMPHASIS

We are sometimes asked, "Which is better: direct or indirect control?" as though we had to choose one or the other. Direct control is the influencing of a child's behaviour directly through commands, direction, suggestions, or requests. Indirect control is the control and direction of a child through the arrangement of his environment. Obviously both methods are necessary, but the better we arrange the environment the less will we need to use direct control. The more adequately we can arrange the world of the small child so that danger is removed, for example, the less will we need to do directly to protect him. In meeting the "T.V. problem," for another example, if we can arrange an environment in which there are plenty of interesting things to do (a time for T.V. among other things), and in which discrimination, planning, and choice are demonstrated, then there will be less need for us to exert direct control.

Another apparent choice is that between love and discipline. We hear today that the important things are to surround a child with abundant love and affection and to set him a good example; if we do this all will be well and we can dispense with discipline. This *sounds* as if no discipline were necessary so long as love is present: it is another one of those traps for unsuspecting parents. If love is chosen and discipline discarded, then almost inevitably love will begin to be used as a means of discipline. Parents may say or imply that "mother cannot love bad little boys" and "you won't behave that way if you want Daddy to love you." If, on the

other hand, discipline is chosen and love discarded, then discipline is ineffective because there is a deficient context. Discipline as a plan of training must be carried on in a context of love, warmth, and acceptance. There is no choice between love and discipline; they are complementary and both are necessary.

Still another apparent alternative sometimes confronting parents concerns *goals*: do they want a good *child* or an eventually mature, self-disciplined *adult*? Can we not try to have the best of two worlds here? We are tempted to stress immediate results, to try to have well-behaved children today and to let the future take care of itself, yet undoubtedly it is more important to think of the kind of person a child is to become than of his present goodness. We must, therefore, try to do two things at the same time: while we are using the necessary controls to take care of the immediate situation we must also be thinking of what the child is learning and becoming. We must use controls in such a way that he will eventually be able to manage without them.

GENUINE CHOICES

There are some real choices which every parent makes either deliberately or unwittingly. There is the choice, for instance, between what we shall call punitive and educational approaches. This is a difficult choice because the centuries-old punitive approach has been built right into our personal attitudes and values. When a child lies, steals, disobeys, or acts inappropriately, we tend immediately to think in terms of punishment. The child must suffer for his badness. Even though we may not think of spanking, we do think of *some* kind of punishment. It may be sending him off to his room, curtailing his privileges, or restricting his freedom. All these methods, however, can be used either as a punishment or as an educative device, and the way we use them depends on how we think of them. The punitive way makes a child feel guilty and realize that he is bad and that we think he is naughty or sinful. The educational approach conveys to him as clearly as possible that we are trying to help him learn how to fit in and to be adequate. "We do not think you are bad but rather that you have a lot more to learn. It is our job to help you." The educational approach leaves out name-calling, blaming, or any such elements as disgrace or disapproval. Here we are doing a very difficult thing: we are separating the child from his behaviour. We still love him and are "for him," but we are helping him to see that every situation demands something of him and that he must learn to live up to these "situational demands."

Another example of a genuine choice which is not easy for a parent to make, but which he *must* make, is whether he is to train his children to

adjust to the world as it is, or to the world as he would like it to be. When I have talked about reducing competition in school or at home, for instance, I have been met with the question "But don't you think we have to train our children to fit in with the world as it is—a highly competitive place?" This is a poser for parents and teachers. Because the world is so competitive, shall we train our children to be competitors, to try to "beat" other people, to get ahead of them, and to do this by whatever method is available? Or shall we rather put our emphasis on solving problems, exploring, and creating so that thus will the child learn to get his feeling of achievement? With reference to the perennial question of "fighting," if we believe that fighting is never a good way to settle disputes and differences of opinion, even though it is still used in our imperfect world, then should we not decide to train our children to get along without it? Many parents make the opposite choice, arguing that because a child will be faced with fighting, he should therefore be trained to "stick up for his rights." It is my opinion that the parent has a genuine choice to make here and should be aware that he is making it. I am suggesting that reasons such as "The world is like that" and "We must help the child to conform with things as they are" are insufficient. *The world will be a better world when there are enough people who are not satisfied with things as they are.*

CONCLUSION

Such are some of the many traps, dilemmas or false choices, unreasonable extremes, and puzzles for unwary parents. Being a parent takes a lot of thought, study, and planning. It would indeed be nice to be able to provide a set of simple rules and some tried and true techniques, but we do not have them, nor does anyone else. We offer instead a consideration of goals, principles, and general ideas and attitudes—and the very comforting thought that parents are allowed quite a few mistakes.

The fabric of personality which is the product of our efforts is woven of the many seemingly small incidents which pile up day by day and year by year. The values a parent treasures, his general approach to life, his attitudes towards people and ideas, and the principles in which he believes and which he holds most precious, will determine not merely *what* he does with his children but also, more important, *how* he does what he does. In the long run, therefore, our choices will depend upon our values. Surely it is not asking too much of us as parents to take stock of what we value most? Such will be the test of our parenthood.

Things

MARY L. NORTHWAY*

RECENTLY I saw a beautiful hooked rug: a snow scene of a cabin by a lake; it was hanging in a handiwork shop in Cape Breton, and I knew that it would be perfect for my living room. The price was not exorbitant; yet I hesitated for a long while, considering whether I should purchase it or not. Why did I hesitate? Was it because my puritanical upbringing had made it seem rather sinful to buy things for oneself? Or had I been listening too seriously to the social sciences' interpretations of acquisitiveness as a form of aggressiveness or a symptom of middle-class "blandness." Indeed, I fell to considering the real place of Things in human living. Is it true that we acquire possessions simply in order to raise our social status or that our love of Things indicates that we are mere materialists living in a materialistic age? So, as I watched the lights and shadows in the Cape Breton rug, I thought about the rôle of Things in my own living.

Truly this is the age of Things. We have so many of them: refrigerators and television sets, cars and cameras, gadgets and gimmicks, records, books and pictures, hats and handiwork, and a variety of knick-knacks for embellishing our what-nots. These are all part of our way of life.

Children love Things. They also learn through them. We have only to watch a baby's use and enjoyment of them to realize that he is doing a great deal more than merely manipulating them. He is discovering his world. He is not learning just about colour and shape and taste. An out-stretched rattle tells him something of love; the squeak of his rubber pig may amuse him and introduce him to the joy of laughter. Wonder, frustration, curiosity, satisfaction: all these may result from contemplation of a piece of cookie on the other side of his playpen. Nursery school workers as well as parents understand the value of Things, and provide them in quantity and variety for the delight and learning of children. Boys carry a treasury of Things in their pockets; girls store them in all the crannies of their bedrooms.

Adults love Things too; indeed, they live in and through them. Recently I visited an elderly friend who lived in a small attic apartment. The shelves were cluttered with Things. "I love looking at them," she said, "I remember the places where I found them or the friends who gave them

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to me." A vase was inscribed "Stowe, Vermont"; a framed postcard came from New York City; a pillow had been woven by Cousin Minnie; and an oil painting was a gift from her school staff to mark her retirement. Her possessions were more than just things; they were people and places and pleasant memories. Like my friend, most of us have some possessions of little obvious value with which we would hate to part because of the human meanings and memories they embody. Among my own is a grotesque china pig that was given me on some hilarious occasion. Even when he has to be dusted I am very fond of him.

In our own house, some of our most valuable possessions are functional things: tools and looms, pianos and carpentry sets. Perhaps the best of these are the garden things: bulbs, seed packets, catalogues, markers, pots, bins of earth in the cellar, and red wriggler worms to be housed and fed through the winter to make the compost rich. There are wonderful cookery things: stoves with controlled ovens, electric beaters and fryers and toasters, can openers that really open, oven-wear dishes, asbestos cooking gloves, candy thermometers and cake decorators. Some of the most fascinating cookery things are the new mixes. The cakes may not taste like those grandma used to make, but our own rarely do anyway. Each new one is an adventure. Mixes may appeal to the lazy cook; they are also the delight of people who retain enough childlike wonder to be excited by surprise packages.

Then there are the things that people create. We have many of these in our house. There are paintings by our artistic friends, and ones we amateurs have done ourselves. There is a reproduction of *The West Wind* sketched by Tom Thomson in our camping country, a set of early Canadian prints given me by my parents. Our beds are covered with patchwork quilts made by the Ladies' Aid of a small church in a nearby village, and our floors have woven rugs designed and stitched by a farm lady who has thirty-four grand-children. The bookcases were made by Fred, who is our neighbour at the lake; our old Boston rocker was rubbed down and revarnished by a persistent lady who came to visit. There are enamelled ashtrays and pottery flower bowls our craftsmen acquaintances have given us, and there is a floor mat that we watched a friend work on for five years before we actually received it. Among all these are the plants we grow, and flower arrangements fresh from the garden from March until November.

A great many of our Things are busy Things: things going somewhere, coming from somewhere, being made. You may find a sweater being knitted, coloured slides being mounted, plants being potted, finger paint being mixed for school. Kindergarteners' creations presented to their teacher may be waiting to find a place in our house. There may be re-

search charts, a manuscript in progress, a cake being made for a party, the dog's blanket being stitched, travel folders from a trip being filed.

Among the best Things are *presents*. Homemade jams and pickles are a boon to receive; everyone welcomes a record that fills a gap in his collection. I once received a tin lunchbox equipped with such household necessities as string and scissors, paper clips and scotch tape, luggage labels and pencil sharpeners: an original and thoughtful gift. A good present often consists of something you would not buy for yourself. One friend sometimes brings a jar of the "biggest olives in the world"—very expensive and very good; someone else comes with a bottle of Chianti. If there is a special celebration for a new book off the press or a first appearance on television, there must be champagne. These are luxurious and exciting gifts.

It is not only more blessed to give than to receive; it is more fun. Finding things that people want requires ingenious enterprise. A friend once mentioned in a rambling conversation that ever since childhood she had wanted a cuckoo clock and a monkey. As monkeys are not easy house companions in Canada, we followed the trail to a cuckoo clock. Christmas was a delight for *us*. Our friend, who since then has had to listen to the cuckoo forty-eight times each day, may find her wish more pleasurable than its gratification!

There are Christmas presents and birthday presents, presents to mark anniversaries and to repay hospitality. All these are occasions designed to satisfy our desire for giving and receiving. There are also the unexpected presents: a peppermill—"Because I knew you wanted one"; a cup—"I saw it and thought it would just go with your tea set"; a pen—"I heard you say you had lost yours." Sometimes in our household we give presents for no reason at all. At the beginning of the Easter holidays I decided to bring home a present of a party supper. I bought asparagus, strawberries out of season, and very special guinea fowl and wild rice. When I came in, I was greeted with, "I have a surprise for *you*. To celebrate the holidays, I've bought strawberries and asparagus and steak and mushrooms." These were particularly merry presents.

The why of Things. Certainly if we look at ourselves as we are and not through a psychological glass darkly, we find that Things are important to us from infancy to old age. Are we immature because we are fond of them, or are we simply human? Man cannot live by Things alone; but can he live without them? From earliest times, he has been fascinated by them: spear-heads, pictures on the walls of caves, cooking utensils. Indeed, archaeologists learn about early man by studying his rude possessions. And we are told that in the future man will still be involved with Things, as he is called to the *many mansions* by the sound of the final trumpet.

Why, then, our present disparagement of Things? Is it because man has always been seeking wholeness and balance in his experience? Perhaps material has become so important that we have lost sight of the meaning behind it. Therefore, we scold ourselves for our joy in worldly goods, and tell ourselves that we should dwell on the importance of human relations or the eternities of the world of ideas. But even these have their truly human meaning in and through Things.

Human relations are not so rarefied that they can exist in spirit alone. Everything is a product of human effort; every human relation needs its present, its comforts through which it may express itself. Things are a medium through which we can communicate our appreciation, our sympathy, our understanding, and our delight. Also, Things help us in our social activities. Even as a party for young children runs into chaos unless it has crayons, paper, paste, and story books, so must our adult gatherings at scientific conferences function through displays, diagrams, models, and pictures. Things are means by which intimates express themselves and groups grow in understanding. That people are more important than the things they make is obvious; that Things are the embodiment of people's importance to themselves and to one another has often been overlooked. Things would not exist without people; a relation rarely exists in a social world without Things.

It is a pity that we are suspicious of Things. By harkening too much to psychology rather than to our own hearts, we have come to doubt the motive of the person who gives a large present or acquires an expensive object. This is not the fault of Things; it is because we have come to doubt people. We have become suspicious of their genuine motives. It is quite true that some individuals most of the time, and that most individuals some of the time, use their Things for ulterior purposes: to impress, to control, or to subdue their neighbours. However, most of us really do not install brass plumbing or purchase an original painting for any such reason; we do so for our own convenience and enjoyment and for the comfort and appreciation of our friends. It is unfortunate that our interest in psychology has not only made us aware of our weaknesses and limitations, but has also caused us to doubt our sincerity, our goodness, and our humanity. Indeed, we have become even more suspicious of our virtues than of our faults.

When children are at nursery school or kindergarten, they often bring a present for the teacher: an apple, a grubby book, or a picture they have made. Later they stop this, for they have discovered their society's suspicions of apple-polishing, of bribery, of seeking power. They have become afraid of their own good impulses. As adults, we do not lose these fears easily. We often ignore a desire to send along a new book to a col-

league or to take a large cake into staff tea, lest people think we are trying to make an impression. Somehow, we have to learn again to live by expressing our feelings through Things, despite these fears. We must also help our children trust themselves sufficiently that they will not doubt their own impulses or be suspicious of their own sincerity. We should try to relearn that Things provide deep enjoyment and enhance the bonds between human beings.

There are also those who minimize Things, saying that they are interested only in the higher universe of ideas. But ideas do not exist in a vacuum. Though their sources may be in the abstract world of the mind, they find expression through the lesser world of matter. The concept of Beauty has meaning for most of us only when it is made manifest in concrete form: in the Mona Lisa, in the sailors' monument at Gloucester, or in the Cape Breton rug. The idea of Love is expressed through fair and spacious communities, through schools equipped with things appropriate to children's minds, through gifts and tokens that convey our appreciation and understanding of one another. The Bible is filled with Things; after all, the loaves and fishes were enjoyed before the Beatitudes were heard.

Much of our personality growth has resulted from Things. We continue to be a part of all that we have met, and not the least of these are Things. They are a part of experience and symbolize it. Our security need not be dependent on Things, but it can be strengthened by them. In them, as in a mirror, we can see ourselves, reflections of our relationships and images of our ideas. Those who condemn Things *per se* condemn humanity, and their own view of life is as incomplete as the one they deplore. Things can be the great tranquillizers of living; rightly used, they can keep us in balance and provide serenity. We adults need our symbols, just as children need their playthings. Our maturity does not demand that we free ourselves from symbols—our cuckoo clock, refrigerator, hooked rug, or piano—rather it implies that we become able to discover within and through them the world of human relations, goodness, and ideas.

Sir Isaac Newton, contemplating a world of great and new ideas, said, "I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than the ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me." Our Things are our pebbles and shells. They are our means of living, not our ends; but they are the means through which our ends may become attainments, and our ideas transformed into realities.

And so the Cape Breton rug hangs in my living room where, from the moment I saw it, I knew that it truly belonged.

Children's Excuses

M. F. GRAPKO*

WHAT'S THE EXCUSE THIS TIME? Indeed, parents feel that their young boy or girl can make up more excuses than any other child alive. A child may not be a budding Einstein, but he's a genius when it comes to thinking up *reasons* why he shouldn't do this, or why he just *has* to do that. Some children can produce a batch of excuses at the drop of a hat. The author remembers from his public-school days a boy playing truant and being very much in a dilemma as he returned to school the next day—a dilemma caused not by his lack of a good excuse but rather by his difficulty in deciding *which* excuse to use!

WHY CHILDREN GIVE EXCUSES

At one time or another, all children give excuses. Excuses are a protective device which guard a child from the necessity of facing up to unpleasant consequences. Such consequences may result from the child's own mistakes and actions, or from fortuitous happenings. The boy who arrives late for school justifies his tardiness by saying that the bus was held up or that there had been a heavy snowfall the night before. It may be said that, although excuses are not the "real" reason, they must be plausible if they are to be effective. Moreover, excuses are usually free from any personal reference. (Notice how most men who are late for a business appointment are suddenly amazed at the notorious traffic conditions in the city.)

Excuses also help to allay a child's feeling of anxiety or frustration. The obstacle which accounts for frustration may be furnished by things or people, or by deficiencies in the environment or the child himself. A child who is stumped on the cross-word puzzle may begin to see little value in this activity or may realize suddenly that he feels tired. A child who is not prepared for his lesson doesn't feel too well, or just can't understand why he has to take music lessons anyway.

A child who feels insecure frequently resorts to excuses to assuage his feelings of threat and fear. Some children's lies, as a form of excuse, are the result of insecurity. The more insecure a child feels, the less plausible is his excuse: for example, a child who breaks his mother's precious vase and is very distraught may explain that it fell over by itself. "It really did!"

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Excuses are very important to a child as a guard against threats to his self-esteem. Johnny receives poor grades in his school work. This he justifies by his dislike of the teacher or the statement that he could do better if he really tried. Many defense mechanisms are simply attempts to adjust to difficult situations in order to protect one's self-esteem. Thus a child who is dropped from the school play because of poor behaviour "explains" to himself that his part wasn't too important anyway.

Children's excuses may also serve as a device to escape unpleasant tasks. Hence Bobby has several good reasons why he can't mow the lawn, visit Aunt Mary, or keep his room tidy. Sometimes the reason isn't that he dislikes these things but rather that they interfere with his own plans to play ball, be with the gang, or watch his favorite T.V. programme.

SHOULD PARENTS WORRY?

The character of the man is in the child. Frequent use of excuses suggests weakness and inability to "face the music." The excuse, as an avoidance reaction, is serious because it denies any need to alter or modify behaviour. Since in some way the excuse justifies the action, there is no real necessity to correct the mistake or take care of the omission. In this way, learning is impaired. Generally, a parent's disappointment in a child who employs excuses stems from a feeling that the child avoids meeting his responsibility, or fails to face up to himself.

For a child, on the other hand, excuses are experiments with the numerous devices and techniques which may help him over more difficult experiences in his life. Frustration, threat, unpleasant consequences, bewilderment; how is a child to meet these experiences? To be sure, they are inevitable in the process of growing up, but in the beginning a child has neither the resources nor the inner strength to deal adequately with them. Children run through the whole gamut of defenses, selecting and staying with those that seem to work best for them.

Parents need not be worried by a child's indulging in excuses as long as an active programme of learning goes on which gradually gives reassurance and confidence to him in meeting his own problems.

SOME RESEARCH FINDINGS

A security test* has been designed to measure the degree of security development in school-age children. This test is in story form and tells of a child named Jimmy and his experiences over the course of one day. Fifteen situations are described, and for each situation five possible responses are supplied. A child taking the test is asked to rank the responses to each situation in the order in which he feels Jimmy is most

*"The Story of Jimmy," Institute of Child Study Security Test, Elementary Form.

likely to respond. One of the five responses for each situation is in the nature of an excuse or, in "security" terms, a deputy agent.

This test was given to 300 boys and girls in Grades 4, 5, and 6. The results show wide differences among children in their use of excuses as "preferred" behaviour. It is found also that boys use more excuses than do girls. However, all children use excuses in one or another of the test situations.

When the situations are examined separately, the results show that children use excuses most frequently when they are faced with consequences arising from an act which they feel they are not directly or wholly to blame. An illustration is the situation wherein a child, having been pushed, pushes back, and at that moment is seen by the teacher; the child is removed from the line and is required to remain after school. Many mealtime episodes of poking between Mary and Tommy provide similar circumstances. The test findings show that older children resort more often than younger children to giving an excuse under such conditions.

The next highest frequency of excuse-giving behaviour occurs in the area of children's relations with adults, including mother, father, and teacher. Father elicits the greatest number of excuses. In the situation describing the father-child relation, over fifty per cent of the children checked the excuse-giving response in the first, second, or third place. The test indicates that when children require some help or advice from father about a project they are doing, a high percentage of them will choose "not to bother father since he is always too busy."

The area of peer relations comes next in order of frequency of excuses. The incidence of excuses is higher when children are involved in games or play than when they are involved in work and classroom activities. In both relations with adults and those with peers children appear to use excuses less frequently as they grow older.

The area showing the lowest frequency of excuse-giving behaviour is that of activities in which a child is accountable to himself. These activities include his hobbies, work preparation, handling of his own money, and incidents of self-injury (falling from a fence). Here also the incidence of excuses shows a decrease as he grows older.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Parents can understand the reasons for excuses. As with the beginning of lying in your children, the parent must accept the behaviour for what it conveys, but at the same time must recognize the need to give help and guidance to a child in establishing more adequate ways of dealing with his frustrations, fears, and problems. The thrill of learning *can* override the threat of failure. A child who is beset with fear because he has failed

is evidently in need of more understanding and trust from his parents. This is not to imply that mistakes or failures can or should be removed from learning, or that learning to face up to things can be made easier or less arduous.

Parents must be patient. Do not expect too much too soon. It isn't strange that a child makes mistakes, nor is it strange that he needs time to learn to face them. Patience must go hand in hand with a programme of training which helps him develop confidence and reassurance: confidence that he *can* deal with obstacles, frustrations, and insecurity if he puts forth the effort, and reassurance that his parents understand and accept him along with his problems.

Parents can examine the standards set for a child. If the proposed activities and goals are too far beyond a child's level of readiness and skill, he may be forced to face too many obstacles and difficulties, and thus be impeded in his development of self-confidence. To insist on standards that are too high may increase a child's dependency on excuses.

Parents can anticipate difficulties that lead to excuses. Work, play, and routines may be planned so that a child has little reason to complain that work is interfering with play, or to forget that dinner was at six o'clock. A child who is given some voice in determining his own activities and the rules and regulations of his family, is more likely to face up to his mistakes and omissions in developing a sense of responsibility.

Parents need to help a child interpret his experiences. In a sense, excuses are a denial or distortion of reality, an unwillingness to face up to the facts or to see the facts as they are. To face reality is not easy for a child for the reasons already mentioned and it is the more difficult because a large part of his life is mixed up with fantasy and day-dreams. Parents must let their child know that they are not fooled by his excuses. Indeed, excuses are to be witnessed as a sign of a child's need for growth in responsibility and of his need to accept himself. Parents can help by their understanding, support, and encouragement, which lead a child to a more positive and realistic approach to his problems. At times, words may be sufficient, but generally example serves better. A child whose parents accept unpleasant consequences, meet obstacles, and assume responsibility emulates them and gradually learns and adopts their healthy, productive way of living.

Institute of Child Study Security Test

"The Story of Jimmy"*

THIS TEST is a first attempt at measuring security as defined by Dr. Blatz and his co-workers at the Institute of Child Study, and is intended primarily for use with elementary school children in Grades 4 to 8. If we accept the validity of the author's rationale, "security" is a function of both a child's degree of mental health and his level of maturity. Five levels of security are described: (1) independent security; (2) mature dependent security; (3) immature dependent security; (4) deputy agent; and (5) insecurity—presumably as mutually exclusive categories. The story describes fifteen significant "events" in a child's life, following which are five statements, the child's response to each being assigned to one or other of the security categories. Quantitatively, the test provides a *consistency* score (based on the degree of uniformity in assigning statements to the five categories) and a *security* score (based on the degree to which a child's ranks agree with the author's). Qualitatively, the test is intended to reveal those areas of activity in which retardation of security development is greatest. Repeated administration of the test over several years would provide a developmental picture of a child's security growth.

"The Story of Jimmy" meets the need for a test which does not require special training on the part of a teacher. Younger children especially enjoy doing the test and few feel threatened by its administration, particularly since the items are presented in an interesting way and responses do not require the solution of problems.

The value of the test is weakened by the fact that younger or less able children may have difficulty in understanding some of the items and in determining the relative merit of each. Assuming that security is a function of personality, content seems to have been emphasized at the expense of control and quality of response.

It is obvious from an examination of the manual that Dr. Grapko has devoted considerable care to its preparation. He has recognized the relatively small population upon which the normative data are based and will undoubtedly extend these as information becomes available. Much of the positive value of this initial attempt to provide teachers with a practical classroom instrument is lost by the unwieldy statistical computation required and by a lack of research data, particularly on the relation of "security" scores to a child's reading achievement and level of intelligence.

*This review has been contributed by J. Grant McMurray, Supervisor of Psychological Services, Board of Education for the Township of North York. The test is distributed by the Vocational Guidance Centre, Ontario College of Education, 371 Bloor St. W., Toronto.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Complete Book of Children's Play, by RUTH E. HARTLEY and ROBERT M. GOLDENSON.
Thomas Y. Crowell Co., N. Y. (Ambassador Books Limited, Toronto), 1957.
Pp. 454, \$6.25.

Professional people working with parents will be interested to take a look at this book about play and recreation of children from infancy to adolescence. Here is a reference that gives a neat, clear background of play -- the satisfactions derived, its part in building personality, its contribution to sound mental health -- in addition to the kind of practical detail which parents need in finding answers to their many questions about the what, when, how of children's play.

Parents might very well consider this book a worthwhile addition to their shelf of reference books - along with the first aid manual, the cook book, and perhaps Goren and Spock! Its coverage of play from infancy to adolescence means that it will be referred to many times through the years. Here are a few sub-headings selected at random: Pets for apartments, keeping busy while sick, successful party games, when children play "how babies are born", important messes, critics not wanted, community activities, nursery school, camp, play on trains, planes and automobiles.

A full index and clear headings for chapter sub-sections make for quick reference. The writing style is concise and displays a fine humour. The appendix of almost one hundred pages is invaluable in itself, with its lists of books and magazines on various topics and for various ages, lists of records, household items for use in play, play materials to be bought and how to know when to buy them, organizations which will supply information on all kinds of interests and hobbies.

Nan Foster, Parent Education Division

Your Child's Play, by GRACE LANGDON. The National Society for Crippled Children and Adults, Inc., Chicago, 1957. Pp. 25. 25¢.

This twenty-five page booklet which costs just twenty-five cents might well be kept on every kitchen shelf along with the cook books.

It is a wise book, full of tips concerning the "what shall I do now?" of children, pre-schoolers up to teens, without attempting to provide you with an age list of toys. No one who understands children's play life as does Grace Langdon, the author, would hope that such a list could meet your particular child's play needs.

The author envisages for you the many simple play possibilities every home possesses and trusts your understanding of your own child's needs, whether he is a runabout or handicapped. Camps and community centres will find this booklet equally handy.

Dorothy A. Millichamp, Assistant Director

Why Did This Have to Happen?, by EARL SCHENCK MIERS. The National Society for Crippled Children and Adults, Inc., Chicago, 1957. Pp. 28. 25¢.

This booklet, described as "An Open Letter to Parents", comes from a father who is handicapped and an author. It carries a candid message of "comfort and insight" directed to the parents of handicapped children, which message is equally a challenge to every parent.

Drawing from his own childhood experience, the author tells us something of what the handicapped child feels and needs as he grows up. This turns out to be a reflection of the feelings and needs of all children.

The booklet leaves us feeling more sure of what we can and must do for every child -- handicapped or otherwise.

Dorothy A. Millichamp, Assistant Director

Chemical Anthropology, A New Approach to Growth in Children, by ICIE G. MACY and HARRIET J. KELLY. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago (The University of Toronto Press, Toronto), 1957. Pp. 132, \$3.75.

This interpretation of chemical anthropology is based on data presented in NUTRITION AND CHEMICAL GROWTH IN CHILDREN, an earlier three-volume work, by Icie G. Macy, one of the present authors, viewed in the light of new developments in the procedures for assessing body composition. Intensive observations made by a multidisciplinary research team on a small group of children as they grew and developed from four to twelve years, are analysed and discussed briefly in the framework of the authors' concept of growth.

The student or research worker in nutrition, child care and child development is challenged by this exposition to observe the growing child "in a new chemical, physical and functional relationship". CHEMICAL ANTHROPOLOGY emphasizes anew the significance of the child's internal environment.

Lindsay Weld, Research Division

The Good Housekeeping Book of Baby and Child Care, by L. EMMETT HOLT, JR., M.D. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York (S. J. Reginald Saunders & Co. Ltd., Toronto), 1957. Pp. 282. \$4.95.

This is a most attractive book with its shiny paper and really lovely photographs of infants and young children. Containing specific information about both psychological and physical aspects of child rearing, it is strongest when discussing physical care. Particularly helpful to parents would be the section on the sick child, in which childhood diseases are dealt with from the point of view of symptoms, treatment, prevention and the advisability of exposures.

The section on behaviour problems is brief and seems rather weak in spots. Suggestions for the treatment of problems are offered with very

few reasons why. This reviewer is doubtful whether this portion of the generally excellent content is sufficiently general to develop in a parent an attitude which would help her through her unique problems when the rather "pat" answers supplied don't work. The suggestion that poor eating habits might, in the last resort, be cleared up by moving the child from his home to a hospital is rather jarring; the few set rules about spanking open a definite controversy; rewards and punishments for motivating children are given rather too heavy an emphasis.

The strengths of the book, however, tend to outweigh weaknesses. It should prove helpful resource material for a parent to have on hand. Everyone in the family will enjoy the pictures. A parent of a first child would be delighted with the details of folding diapers, preparing formulae and selecting the clothing for the new baby.

Betty Flint, Research Division

The Ontario Leaf Album, by F. A. URQUHART, M.A., PH.D., Head, Division of Zoology & Palaeontology, Royal Ontario Museum. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1957. Pp. 62, \$4.75 (hardbound), \$1.95 (paperbound).

Most children collect leaves but, unfortunately, after a certain amount of admiration and discussion, they are lost or destroyed. This fine new leaf album, compiled by Dr. Urquhart, should not only provide a safe place for collections but should also help with identification. On the front page are clear instructions for collecting, preserving and mounting leaves. Then follows sixty-two pages which provide a separate page for each kind of leaf discovered. There is an outline of the leaf, a place for mounting, a description of the tree, bark, leaf and seed and other interesting information. At the bottom of each page, the collector records where and when he found the leaf.

Whether the project is undertaken by a class, a family or an individual, this album should encourage the user to make careful observations, seek further information and enjoy his accomplishment.

Moles and Shrews, written and illustrated by CHARLES L. RIPPER. William Morrow and Co., New York, (George J. McLeod, Ltd., Toronto), 1957. Pp. 64, \$3.00.

What do you know about Moles and Shrews? Do you prefer molehills in your lawn to thousands of cutworms? Have you seen a small creature which looks like a mouse with a snout?

Charles Ripper's book, MOLES AND SHREWS, is most interesting and is written in print large enough for children to read. The author has illustrated the book himself in a very clever fashion; each drawing is of the type which stimulates discussion.

This is an excellent nature book for the school or home.

Flora M. Morrison, St. George's Elementary School

Son of Columbus, by HANS BAUMANN; translated by ISABEL and FLORENCE McHUGH; illustrated by WILLIAM STOBBS. Oxford University Press, London, 1957. Pp. 248, \$2.50.

In 1502, Christopher Columbus took Fernan, his son aged fourteen, with him on his fourth voyage to the New World. The drama and adventure of this last voyage are seen through the eyes of Fernan and his friend, Tahaka, an intrepid Carib Indian boy who had previously been brought to Spain by Columbus. The turbulent times of Columbus are recreated for the reader. The story of the final voyage makes a gripping tale. Perhaps the most important discovery is the character of Columbus, a ruthlessly determined individual, often cruel, always inventive and apparently undaunted in the face of all the forces of man or nature. William Stobbs' illustrations in black and white add to the stern verve of the tale.

SON OF COLUMBUS makes fascinating reading and sheds keen, plausible light on the kind of man responsible for the shape of human history.

Margaret Goad, Diploma Student

A Shadow on the Sea, written and illustrated by TESSY THEOBALD. Oxford University Press, London, 1957. Pp. 195. \$2.00.

Four English children spend a holiday alone in their family cottage and, between doing their own cooking and keeping house, manage to have several exciting adventures exploring with their canoe. A SHADOW ON THE SEA may introduce Canadian readers to some English customs and expressions and should prove interesting reading generally for those in the upper grades.

Lila Goldenberg, St. George's Elementary School

Platero and I, by JUAN RAMON JIMENEZ; translated by ELOISE ROACH; illustrated by JO ALYS DOWNS. University of Texas Press, Austin (Burns & MacEachern, Toronto), 1957. Pp. 212. \$4.75.

Thirty years after its original publication in Spanish, here is now a translation of the most famous work of Juan Ramon Jimenez, 1956 Nobel Prize Winner. One marvels at the skill of Eloise Roach in working out this "faithful" translation which evokes strange peace, yearning, nostalgia and wonder in the reader. Platero, by the way, is a little donkey and, in these 138 word sketches, Jimenez pours out affectionately to him his thoughts, his feelings, his reminiscences about life around him in a small Spanish town. It is truly extraordinary to catch the poet's philosophy through these lovely pictures of the everyday and the simple. The drawings by Jo Alys Downs are unusually suitable - delicate in both flavour and tone.

A sensitive and imaginative child, and those adolescents who seem particularly aware of beauty of thought and feeling, will like to own this collection or hear some of it read. Some parents, loving it, will want to read aloud some of it with the family, selecting the right time and place. The time should be well chosen.

Nan Foster, Parent Education Division

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The Revolution in Education

A lucid, provocative statement of the basic issues confronting education in the modern age of science, technology, and democracy.

Mortimer J. Adler and Milton Mayer

The rise of democracy, industry, and modern technological science during the last century caused a major revolution in the structure of society and in the conduct of life. It is the authors' thesis that this revolution has invalidated all earlier educational theories and that a fundamental reappraisal is in order. What should education be today? What should be its objectives? What materials and methods should it use? To whom should it be directed? How much should be offered?

The authors of this book show the kinds of controversies engendered by the attempts of education to take account of the shift from schooling suitable to the upper classes to schooling suitable to all members of a democratic electorate. They point out that much of the hot argument now going on rests more on misunderstandings than on true differences—that where one man is talking about the *ends* of education, another is concerned with *methods*, and still another with *educational institutions*.

April 22 225 pages \$3.75

Public Library Services for Children

By Lionel R. McColvin

UNESCO PUBLIC LIBRARY MANUALS NO. 9

Unesco has been reminded many times during the past few years by librarians and others that the world needs a book on public library services for children written from an international rather than a national point of view, and particularly adapted for countries where libraries are in an early stage of development. In response to repeated expressions of this need, Unesco commissioned Mr. Lionel R. McColvin to write this book, which it is hoped will give practical guidance and encouragement to librarians, teachers, local and national government officials and others throughout the world who are in any way concerned with the development of public library services for children.

104 pages \$1.50

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